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Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SY-05 MCT-01 SS-15 PM-04 NSC-05
CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00 L-03 IGA-02 AID-05
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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 695

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 7015

FOL TEL SENT ACTION BANGKOK FROM SONGKHLA DATED MARCH 31, 1977
REPEATED FOR YOUR INFO

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SONGKHLA 0071

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, TH
SUBJECT: COUNTERINSURGENCY OPERATIONS IN THE SOUTH

SUMMARY:ACCORDING TO OFFICIALS HERE,OPERATIONS IN THE SOUTH ARE FORCING SOME INSURGENTS OUT OF TRADITIONAL STRONGHOLDS INTO AREAS WHERE THEY MAY HAVE MORE DIFFICULTY OPERATING. AS EXPECTED, DIRECT CONTACT WITH INSURGENTS HAS BEEN SLIGHT AND MOST RTG CASUALTIESHAVE RESULTED FROM BOOBY TRAPS. IT APPEARS UNLIKELY THAT OPERATION IN MID-SOUTH OR THAI-MALAYSIAN BORDER OPERATION WIWL RESULT IN LARGE NUMBERS OF INSURGENTS BEING KILLED OR CAPTURED, BUT OBJECTIVE OF KEEPING THEM OFF BALANCE AND ON THE RUN IS BEING ACHIEVED. END SUMMARY

1. FOURTH ARMY OFFICERS IN NAKORN SRI THAMMARAT (NST) SAID MARCH 28 THAT OPERATION BEING CONDUCTED IN MOUNTAINS BORDERING UURAT AND NST IS DRIVING SOME INSURGENTS OUT OF TRADITIONAL STRONGHOLDS. THIS SEEMS TO BE CONFIRMED BY REPORTS OF NEWLY ARRIVED INSURGENTS IN KRABI AND RANONG PROVINCES TO THE WEST. OPERATION WHICH HAS NOW
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BEEN YN PROGRESS OVER ONE MONTH HAS NO TERMINATION DATE NOR AT PRESENT ARE REINFORCEMENTS OF MARINES AND RTA FROM THE 11TH REGIMENT SCHEDULED TO BE WITHDRAWN.

2. MUCH OF THE ACTION HAS BEEN IN THE KRUNG CHING AREA OF THASALA DISTRICT, NST WHERE INSURGENTS HAVE LONG BEEN ENTRENCHED. NEWSPAPER REPORTS INDICATING INSURGENT CAMP THERE HAD BEEN TAKEN BY RTG ARE

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INACCURATE. INSURGENTS ARE HOLDING OUT PRIMARILY FROM BOOBY TRAPS AND INFLICTING CASUALTIES ON RTG TROOPS. MARINES ARE TAKING THE BULK OF THE CASUALTIES IN THIS AREA. SIX WERE ADMITTED TO NST HOSPITAL MARCH 27 AND HOSPITAL OFFICIALS SAY THERE HAVE BEEN A STEADY STREAM OF BATTLE CASUALTIES ADMITTED OVER THE PAST THREE WEEKS. ON MARCH 30 PROVINCIAL POLICE IN RON PHIBUN DISTRICT OF NST REPORTEDLY KILLED 5 CT THERE DURING VORDON AND SEARCH OPERATION.

3. THAI ARE ALSO TAKING THE BULK OF THE CASUALTIES IN THE JOINT BORDER OPERATION. ONE RTA OFFICER REASONED THAT THIS WAS BECAUSE CPM, NOT EXPECTING TO HAVE TO DEFEND THEIR CAMPS FROM THE SOUTH, CONCENTRATED THEIR DEFENSES ALONG THE NORTHERN PERIMETERS WHICH FALL IN THAI AREA OF OPERATION. THERE HAS BEEN SPORATIC CONTACT BETWEE THAI AND MALAYSIAN TROOPS AND INSURGENT FORCES IN SADAO. ON MARCH 28 ONE INSURGENT WAS KILLED BY BORDER PATROL POLICE WHEN DRIVEN NTO THEIR BLOCKING FORCE BY ADVANCING TROOPS. ONE M-16 RIFLE WAS CAPTURED ALONG WITH SOME AMMUNITION. ORIGINALLY OBJECTIVE WAS TO FORCE CPM INTO MALAYSIA, BUT THIS HAS NOT HAPPENED. RATHER, CPM ARE MOVING BACK AND FORTH OUT OF HARM'S WAY IN THAI TERRITORY.

4. NEWSPAPER REPORTS INDICATING THAT AS A RESULTOF BORDER OPERATION SOME CPM HAVE MOVED OUT OF SADAO STRONGHOLDS INTO KOKE PHO DISTRICT OF PATTANI ARE PLAUSIBLE. SHOULD OPERATION FORCE LARGER NUMBERS OF INSURGENTS INTO AREAS LONG THE PRESERVE OF BANDIT/SEPARJTISTS, CONFLICT BETWEEN THE GROUPS COULD RESULT, THOUGH IT IS CONCEIVABLE THAT FORCED INTERACTION WOULD EVENTUALLY LEAD TOGREATER COOPERATION, THE RATIONALE BEING THAT NOW MORE THAN EVER BOTH GROUPS FACE A COMMON ENEMY IN THE RTG. THIS COULD ALSO LEAD TO GREATER GPM RECRUITMENT EFFORTS AMONG THAI MUSLIMS. AN ADDITIONAL POSSIBILITY IS THAT
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TRADITIONAL RELUCTANCE OF MALAYSIANS TO OPERATE AGAINST SEPARATISTS WOULD BE PARTIALLY OVERCOME IF IT COULD BE CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED THEY WERE ASSISTING CPM.

5. COMMENT: SUSTAINED OPERATIONS IN WHICH GROUND TROOPS ACTUALLY APPROACH AND IN SOME CASES ENTER INSURGENT BASE CAMPS IS AN IMPRESSIVE DEPARTURE FROM USUAL POLICY OF RELYING ON BOMBING AND ARTILLERY EXCLUSIVELY. FACT THAT RTG HAS REINFORCED NUMBER OF TROOPS IN THE SOUTH AND SEEMS PREPARED TO TAKE CASUALTIES IS INDICATIVE OF MORE SERIOUS ATTITUDE TOWARD THE PROBLEM. DURING RECENT VISIT TO NST MINISTER OF DEFENSE, ADMIRAL SA-NGAT CHALOYU REPORTEDLY SAID TROOPS IN THE SOUTH WOULD BE GIVEN WHATEVER SUPPORT MEEDED TO CONTINUE OPERATIONS. IN THE LONG RUN HOWEVER, SUCCESS WILL DEPEND HEAVILY ON ABILITY OF POLICE AND CIVILIAN OFFICIALS TO MOVE INTO AREAS BEING CLEARED, ESPECIALLY IN THE MID SOUTH, AND MAINTAIN SECURITY WITHOUT ANTAGONIZING VILLAGERS AS THEY HAVE DONE IN THE PAST. IT MAY BE SOME TIME BEFORE WE SEE HOW THE RTG DEALS WITH THIS ASPECT OF THE PROBLEM.
HAMILTON

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